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STEPHEN KING THE STAND



MARVEL
LIMITED SERIES
1 of 5
PARENTAL ADVISORY

Soul Survivors

AGUIRRE-SACASA

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MARTIN

STEPHEN KING THE STAND

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PREVIOUSLY IN THE STAND...

Someone at the Project Blue government facility made a mistake. And now, the deadly flu-like virus "Captain Trips" has killed off 99% of the country's population.

The survivors are tasked with living in a world they no longer understand - and making sense of the evil, faceless man that stalks them in their nightmares.

Among these haunted souls is Nick Andros, a deaf-mute wanderer. Wracked with fever, Nick's visions of the dread Randall Flagg gave way to those of the oldest woman in America: Mother Abigail, who beckoned him to come to her with the promise of sanctuary from Flagg's poisonous influence.

Now, for the first time in his life, Nick makes his way towards a greater destination: A shack in a cornfield in Nebraska...



MAY, OKLAHOMA.





Retarded, Nick thought. Great, HE can't read and I can't talk.



Nick tried his best....



...went through his standard dumbshow...



...but it was no use.



Got a toothache? Is that why you don't feel like talking?



Anyway, Nick had already spotted what he was looking for:

A drugstore.





They got to know each other over lunch, in the town square across from the courthouse.

Afterwards, Nick wondered about May's total emptiness.

He gestured to the large circle of buildings that made up its downtown.



Again, Tom had an episode, and Nick worried his new friend was dying.



But then he jerked out of it, as if the word EUREKA had appeared over his head.

You want to know where all the people went!

Well, I guess they went to Kansas City. My laws, yes. Just like my daddy, he run off with a waitress, her name was M-O-O-N, that spells PeePee Packelotte--



Tom launched into a monologue, and Nick thought:

A deaf-mute and a man who's mentally retarded... Of what possible use could we be to each other?



One night, Nick reasoned. I'll stay one night, then leave him in the morning.



THE NEXT DAY.

Nick found Tom playing with a fleet of toy Corgi cars and a plastic Texaco station...



...and was suddenly swept by a totally unexpected sadness. A feeling so deep he feared he might weep.

I can't. I can't leave him.



You moving on, mister?

Nick nodded--



--then pointed to himself, to Tom, to his bike, to the road that led out of May.



Want me to go with you?



Laws, yes! Tom Cullen's going! Tom Cullen's--

--can I take my garage?



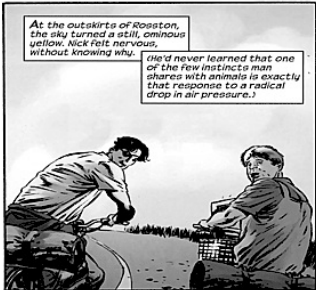


Tom loved the bicycle Nick found for him, loved the basket for his garage, loved the Klaxon horn Nick had added on a whim--

Wistfully, Nick wished he could hear it, to see if it pleased him as much as it seemed to please Tom.

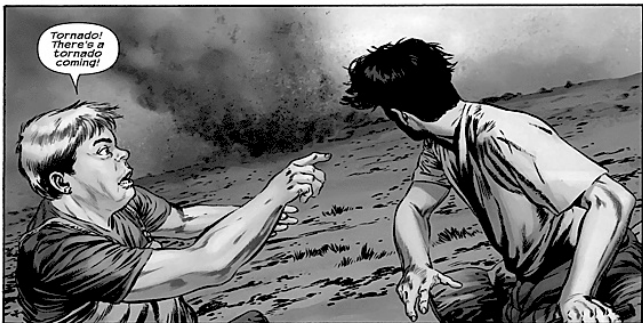


They rode north on Route 23 for two hours, trying to outrace the thunderclouds encroaching from the west.



At the outskirts of Roseton, the sky turned a still, ominous yellow. Nick felt nervous, without knowing why.

He'd never learned that one of the few instincts man shares with animals is exactly that response to a radical drop in air pressure.



Tornado!
There's a
tornado
coming!

While Nick looked for a funnel, Tom raced away, into the field off the road, beating a twisted path through the high grass--



Damn fool, Nick thought, He's going to snap his axle!



Nick pedaled to beat the devil, to catch Tom before he vanished into the decaying structure, but--



No go.

And from the way Tom had tossed his bike aside, there was no question: he was scared out of his skin.



Nick risked one last look over his shoulder--



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A horrible darkness was coming out of the west. Not a cloud, more a...total absence of light. Nick thought:

I am looking at whatever is in my worst dreams, and it is not a man at all, although it sometimes LOOKS like a man. What it really is, is one almighty big black twister sucking up everything unlucky enough to be in its--





Quick!
Quick! Oh my
lawa, yee!

A black and white comic panel showing two men, Nick and Tom, in a dark, confined space. Nick is on the left, looking towards the right. Tom is on the right, partially obscured by a large, dark, draped object. The scene is dimly lit, with a bright light source on the left creating a strong contrast.

*In the last instant of light,
Nick saw they were sharing
the storm cellar with a family
of rat-gnawed corpses--*

*Then came the clam
Nick didn't hear--*

*--and then they were in perfect
darkness, while the tornado's
mad, thrumming vibrations
intensified above them.*

*Nick felt Tom shaking against him
and wondered if he was crying. Even
the air seemed to be trembling
against Nick's face.*

*Time passed, and Nick became
convinced they weren't
alone in the storm cellar.*

*And it wasn't the corpses.
Nick felt the presence of...*

*The dark man, the man who came to
live in his dreams, the creature whose
spirit he had sensed in the black
heart of the cyclone...*

Nick's panic rose, he was about to lunge for the stairs--



--when a flood of dazzling light blinded him.

It was Tom, who'd left his side and opened the door at the top of the stairs.



When his eyes readjusted, Nick scanned the cellar--

If there was anyone else down there with him, Nick didn't see him. (Nor did he want to.)



Nick's watch insisted that he and Tom had only spent fifteen minutes in the storm cellar.



Never before had Nick understood how subjective, how plastic, time really is.

He would've guessed an hour, maybe two.

Once topside, Nick realized why the light had been so blinding.

The barn's roof and walls had been torn off, leaving behind something that suggested the skeleton of a prehistoric monster.



Tom had righted the bicycles--

(A miracle they were still there, thought Nick, and a testament to the tornado's fickleness--)

He was standing with them, shivering and crying.



He saved my life, Nick thought. I'd never seen a twister before in my life. If I'd left him behind in May, I'd be dead as a doornail right now.

Someone was down there with us. Someone who came out of the twister.

Can we go now?
Please?



JULY 7th.
NEAR THE OKLAHOMA-KANSAS BORDER.



You know what, mister? I've never been out of Harper County, laws no, but I know this sign. My Paddy showed it to me once.

Is it the world?
Is Woods the word
for world, I mean. Are
we going into the
world, mister?



Nick nodded, and they started pedaling.

And he thought: it IS the world,
and the world is EMPTY. It's
not just Shoyo or Texarkana,
it's AMERICA, lying like a huge
discarded tin with a few
forgotten peas rolling
around in it.



KANSAS.
THAT NIGHT.

While Tom slept, Nick studied an atlas and realized...

There really *was* a Polk County,
Nebraska, like from his dreams.

Did that mean they were
actually gonna find an old
black woman sitting on her
porch with a guitar,
surrounded by corn?



That night, Nick dreamed of
the man with no face--and
then of corn higher than his
head--and of the sound of
music...



JULY 8th.
COMANCHE COUNTY,
HIGHWAY 160.

What are
they? Those
ain't cows!



JULY 10th.

Another scorcher.

Also, the day they passed
an apple tree and ate its
small, sour fruit.

Nick stopped after two,
but Tom ate six, greedily.



That made him sick, of
course, and Tom couldn't
ride his bike anymore.



In the drugstore, looking for some Pepto-Bismol for Tom, Nick saw a mannequin out of the corner of his eye.

Only it wasn't a mannequin, it was Julie Lawry.

Jesus, are you real? Or a ghost?

Why ain't you saying anything?

Nick went through his dumb show again with quicker results this time.

You can't talk? You're a mute?

Well, you ain't bad-looking. That's something.

Nick could smell at least three different kinds of perfume on her.

My name's Julie, Julie Lawry. What's yours?

You can't tell me, can you? Poor you.

Okay.

I'm so glad to see someone, who cares if it's a retard and a deaf-mute?

I'M NICK.
I'M TRAVELING WITH
TOM CULLEN,
WHO IS LIGHTLY
RETARDED. WE'RE
GOING TO NEBRASKA.
COME WITH US,
IF YOU WANT.



LATER.

Is that the retard?



Nick nodded, not liking the cruel word.

Nor, suddenly, the girl. There was some... restless instability in her that unsettled him.

I'm Julie.

How you doing, cutie-pie?

Hi?



Uh-uh. I ain't gonna.

Tom Cullen don't like medicine. Laws no, tastes bad.



That's right, Tom. Don't drink it, it's poison.



Tom Cullen doesn't drink poison! Paddy said if it'll kill the rats in the barn, it'll kill Tom! No poison!





But, in fact, he could.



She looked different.
Somehow real for the
first time.

A gun was something
she couldn't manipulate
to her own advantage.

I...I
didn't
mean
it.

I'll do
anything
you want,
honest.



Feeling soiled and depressed,
Nick kept the gun on Julie until
she vanished around a corner,
two blocks away.



When he turned
back...

...Tom was nowhere
to be seen.



Great.

Thanks a
lot, Julie.



TWENTY MINUTES LATER.

Nick found Tom a few blocks away from Pratt's business district.

Please don't make me drink it, laws no, Daddy says if it'll kill rats, it'll kill me... pleaseee!

But Nick had given up on that idea.

Let the gunk in Tom's stomach run its course, however long it takes.

I'm sorry, Tom Cullen's sorry...

They walked back to Main Street together--

Julie, Nick thought--



--as he felt something whiz by, grazing his face.



Tom shrieked and took off; Nick turned around--



Just in time to catch the muzzleflash of another blast in a window of the Pratt Hotel--



Julie, Nick thought again, taking off after Tom--



That night, they slept in a barn three miles north of Pratt. Miraculously, none of Julie's shots had landed, however many times she tried.

Nick's last conscious thought was, Well, at least we're done with that hellion...

...though that would turn out to be only half-true.

JULY 12TH.



They were riding bikes they'd acquired in Iuka when, at a quarter to three in the afternoon, Nick saw something in his rearview mirror.

A twinkle of something.



A good old Detroit Chevy truck, rolling along US 281.



Nick felt a stab of panic in his heart.

What if it was Julie driving that truck? What if she still had her gun?



It wasn't, thank God.

Holy crapes on a carousel, am I glad to see you boys! Climb on up here and let's see where we're going.

And that, friends, was how Nick Andros and Tom Cullen met Ralph Brentner.

TO BE CONTINUED...

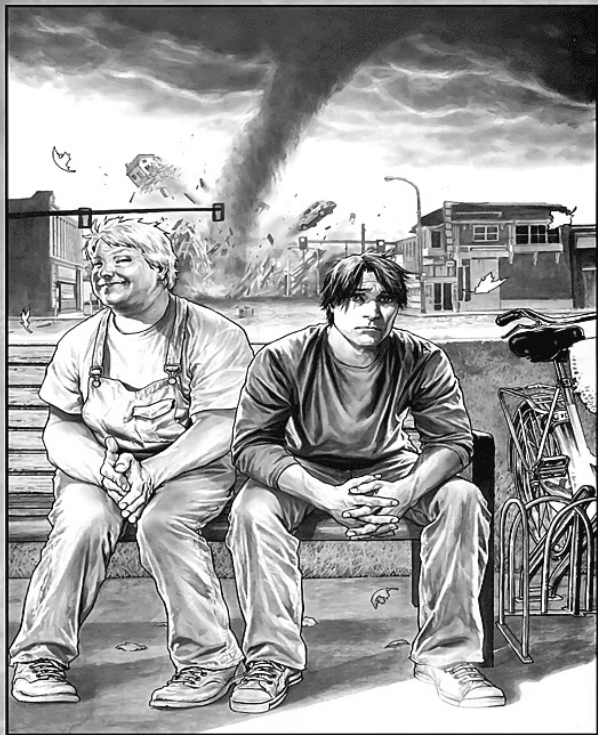
The sinister presence of Randall Flagg is felt in Mike Perkins' black and white line art.



The final colored version by Laura Martin was seen earlier in this issue.



**Lee Bermejo's black and white line art for
this issue's cover.**

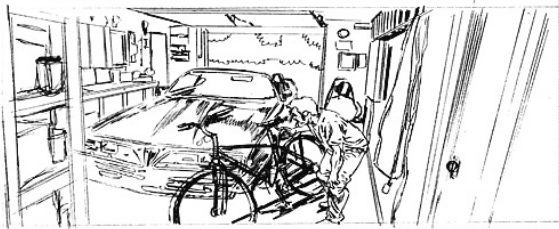


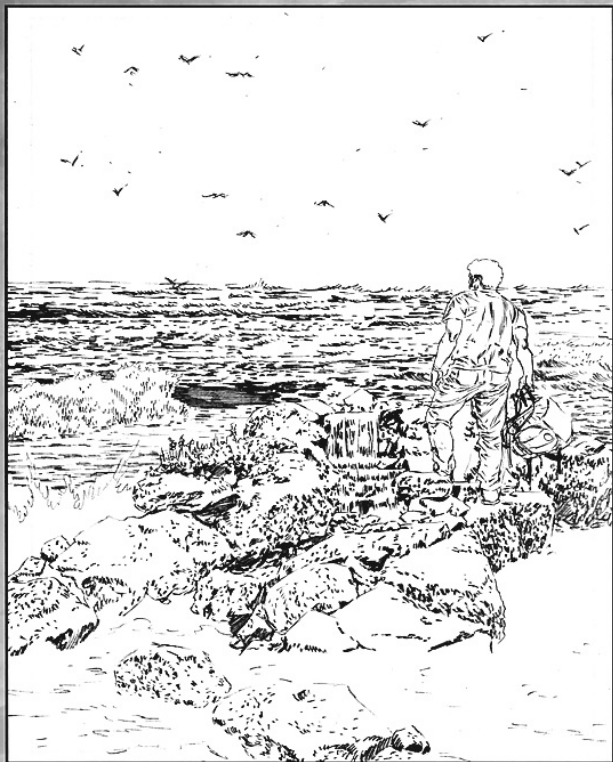
STEPHEN KING **THE STAND**

SOUL
SURVIVORS
ISSUE
2



PREVIEW









Next: You can't stab someone to death
with a guitar...



"Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa has been brilliant in adapting Stephen King's novel into the comic medium...taking all the emotion and horror from the classic horror novel and capturing it perfectly. A tremendous achievement."
--Paul Stotts, Bloodofthemuse.com



The end is nigh as a deadly plague sweeps the nation and widespread panic overcomes the dying masses of America in a terrifying and inexorable tide. Who will be left to rebuild on the ruins of their past lives as the ancient rivalry of Good vs. Evil has only just begun?

Based on the popular apocalyptic novel by celebrated author Stephen King, *The Stand* brings together critically acclaimed writer Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa (*Sensational Spider-Man*, *Angel: Revelations*, HBO's *Big Love*) and the gritty visuals of artist Mike Perkins (*Captain America*) to tell a tale which begins at the end of the world.

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FOR STRONG LANGUAGE & CONTENT

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